



State of Louisiana Animal Welfare Commission

Office of the Governor

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Meeting Minutes

May 2, 2009

I. Call to order

Gary Balsamo called to order the regular meeting of the Louisiana Animal Welfare Commission at 9:30 AM on May 2, 2009, in room 1212 B, Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine, Baton Rouge, LA.

II. Roll call

The following persons were present: Margaret George (humane organization representative), Mary Lee Oliphant-Wood (commercial breeder representative), Dr. Philip Dupont (LVMA representative), Dr. Gary Balsamo (Governor's Office of Community Programs representative), Mr. Pinckney Wood (humane organization representative), Hilton Cole (animal control representative), Joelle Rupert (humane organization representative), Dr. Brian Melius (small animal practice).

The following members were absent: Lt. Rhett Trahan (law enforcement representative), Dr. Robert Gros (LVMA representative), Susan Schneider (quarterhorse breeders' representative), Dr. Samuel Burke (at-large).

The Louisiana Thoroughbred Breeders' Association slot and the Department of Health and Hospitals slot are vacant. Mr. Pinckney Woods and Dr. Robert Gros' terms are expired but they continue to serve until reappointed or replaced.

III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

The minutes from the last meeting were read. The minutes were approved by vote of the Commission as read. Motion made by Mr. Cole, seconded by Ms. Oliphant-Wood.

IV. Open issues

- a) The position statement entitled, "Acceptance of Longer Duration Rabies Vaccines," was voted to be approved as written by a unanimous vote of the Commission. Motion made by Dr. Dupont, seconded by Ms. George.
- b) Discussion of the position statement entitled, "Intact Pet Licensing Fees," was discussed and, by unanimous agreement of the members of the Commission, was dropped from consideration. The general feeling of members was that difficulty existed in specifying "significantly higher" fees than those collected to register neutered or spayed animals. Mr. Cole stated that the highest that can be charged to register an animal in Louisiana is \$16.00, therefore support of any fee in excess is problematic. A clarification was also lacking in the definition of "legitimate purebred ...to ensure and promote the proper treatment and well-being of animals"

pet breeding businesses” for which the statement suggested exemptions from higher fees. This was deemed to be a more important question for the Commission to address, namely the creation of a statewide organization of legitimate breeders. The idea is for the Commission to investigate the possibility of the creation of a State Dog and/or Cat Breeders’ Association, or a similarly titled organization, that will gather registration funds and self regulate their businesses through enforcement of applicable standards that will discourage so-called puppy factories from operating within the state. This organization would also serve to differentiate independent breeders from breeding businesses. The position statement was tabled, but the chair asked for volunteers to head an ad hoc committee to investigate the possibility of fostering the creation of the before mentioned organization. Ms. Oliphant-Wood offered to head the committee and will seek the participation of Dr. Burke.

- c) Mr. Wood suggested that, in lieu of a position statement encouraging enforcement of animal cruelty laws, the Commission work to establish a template animal cruelty law that can be applied to local and parish jurisdictions. However, Mr. Wood felt it imperative to work with the legislature to “clean up” present animal cruelty legislation. Present legislation is unclear in differentiating “aggravated” and “simple” cruelty. He also suggested that the Commission assist the legislators in addressing certain problems with the state’s present laws, namely the differentiation of the degrees of cruelty, the specification of certain crimes as felonies or misdemeanors, the monetary amount of fines, etc. Mr. Wood suggested that the Commission conduct an analysis or study of the present state animal cruelty statutes. The members suggested that this work be spearheaded by a committee that would consist of Mr. Wood, Mr. Cole, Ms. Rupert and that an additional committee member be recruited from the Department of Agriculture with the advice of the State Veterinarian, Dr. Henry Moreau, to participate in the preparation of a model animal cruelty law. The proposed ad hoc committee members agreed to participate. Dr. Balsamo volunteered to petition Dr. Moreau for a Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) committee member. The creation of a Committee that will include the participation of a representative of LDAF to create a Model Animal Cruelty Law by January 1, 2010, was approved unanimously by vote of the Commission. Motion made by Dr. Melius, seconded by Dr. Dupont.
- d) Dr. Balsamo then conducted a review of Commission membership. The members of the Commission recommended that a list of names and contact information be provided to the membership to facilitate the conduct of business. Mr. Cole also requested that the Governor’s Office resend the appropriate documents so that he can fulfill his obligations for membership. Dr. Balsamo agreed to distribute the list to the members.
- e) A motion was made by Mr. Wood, seconded by Ms. Oliphant-Wood to petition the State Epidemiologist, an employee of the Office of Public Health, Department of Health and Hospitals, the director of the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section and the supervisor of the State Public Health Veterinarian, to request a Memorandum of Understanding in which the State Public Health Veterinarian, with assistance from the staff of the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section and advisory assistance from Office of Public Health Environmental Services, would take responsibility for conducting five to ten physical inspections of public animal shelters each year. These inspections will be conducted on a rotating basis until all Louisiana public animal shelters have been inspected. This total annual number of inspections will also include ad hoc inspections that the Commission requests pursuant to complaints received from the general public, and that the Commission determines to merit
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prompt attention. The State Public Health Veterinarian will then make his or her findings available to the Commission. The data pursuant to these inspections will be used by the Commission to create reports for distribution to the parish and local governing authorities in order to make constructive recommendations for improvement of the shelters in the state.

The Commission believes that the State Public Health Veterinarian is in a unique position and is sufficiently qualified to administer the inspections. His or her background in public health, sanitation, infectious diseases, and administration of the state's rabies surveillance program, make the State Public Health Veterinarian the logical choice of the Commission to assist in this legislatively mandated program. Dr. Balsamo removed himself from the discussion and elected to abstain from the vote. The remaining members, however, voted unanimously to approve the request. The letter will be sent by Mr. Wood.

- f) Dr. Balsamo then distributed a proposed inspection document that would be used to conduct mail-in audits and physical inspections of the state's public animal control shelters. Mr. Cole suggested that the present document be amended. He suggested the addition of one question: Does this facility comply with Louisiana Revised Statutes? Ms. Oliphant-Wood moved that the inspection document be approved as amended, seconded by Dr. Melius. The motion was approved by vote of the Commission.

V. New business

- a) Election of officers. The members of the Commission suggested that the present officers: Dr. Gary Balsamo (Chairman), Pinckney Wood (Secretary) and Mary Lee Oliphant-Wood (Treasurer) be re-nominated for the same offices. Dr. Melius moved that the nominations be closed, seconded by Ms. George. The three nominees were all then unanimously elected to the following positions:
Chair: Dr. Gary Balsamo
Vice Chair: Mr. Pinckney Wood
Treasurer: Ms. Mary Lee Oliphant-Wood.
Dr. Balsamo reminded Ms. Oliphant-Wood that the proper signature cards must be given to the bank so that Ms. Oliphant-Wood could easily carry out the role of treasurer. A treasurer's report will be presented by the treasurer at all ensuing meetings.
- b) Mr. Wood discussed the new legislation pending in the 2009 legislative session. He volunteered along with Dr. Balsamo and Mr. Cole to offer the Commission's assistance to the legislature in drafting future legislation. Mr. Wood also volunteered to keep the members posted on developments as the session progresses. Dr. Balsamo informed the Commission that phone polls would be conducted to gauge the feelings of the membership toward any legislation.
- c) The Commission briefly discussed creation of an anti-tethering position statement and a position statement regarding euthanasia procedures and the length of time animals should be held by animal control shelters prior to euthanasia. Dr. Balsamo asked the Commission to submit potential position statements on these subjects so that they might be acted upon at the ensuing meeting in late summer.
- d) The final item on the agenda was a discussion related to creation of a biannual newsletter to be produced by the Commission and distributed electronically, and the creation of a LAWC website. An electronic newsletter would cost the Commission nothing to produce. Ms. George volunteered to come up with potential formats. Mr. Wood brought up the fact that an LAWC website would likely have to be put out for
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public bid and would be subject to the states review process. Mr. Wood volunteered to check into the requirements. Dr. Balsamo volunteered to inquire with the Governor's Office of Community Programs to see if that office might provide a page linked to their site, which the Commission could use in the immediate future.

VI. Adjournment

Dr. Melius moved that the meeting be adjourned, seconded by Dr. Dupont. After a vote by the Commission the meeting was adjourned at noon.

Minutes submitted by: Gary Balsamo

Minutes are to be approved at the ensuing Commission meeting.

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